

エコシステム

Ecosystem
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お花見の姿 ～ソメイヨシノの弱み～

- | 画一性より多様性
- | お花見も多様に楽しむ
- | 大量植栽が生み出す問題
- | 自然との共存を目指した並木
- | 在来種によるエコロジカル・ネットワークを

桜は日本の春の代名詞的な存在ですが、将来のまちに本当に必要とされるのはサクラ並木ではなく、さまざまな在来の植物によって取り戻された自然の生態系です。

Cherry blossoms are a symbol of spring in Japan. However, in planning future cityscapes it would be better to establish more natural ecosystems that are composed of a variety of native species than to rely on lines and rows of horticulturally created cherry trees.

Flower-Viewing in Springtime-The Problem with Somei-Yoshino Cherry Trees (a horticultural plant)

Cherry blossoms are a representative flower of spring in Japan. Since ancient times, Japanese people have enjoyed the Ohanami (cherry-blossom viewing) custom of having outdoor parties with food and drinks under blossoming cherry trees. Ohanami has become an important tourism resource of Japan. In recent years, many foreign tourists have visited Japan to enjoy cherry-blossom viewing alongside with Japanese tourists. For these reasons, there are numerous parks and roadsides planted in cherry trees throughout Japan.

There are nine wild species of cherry trees in Japan, from which more than 600 cherry species have been horticulturally created. Among them the Somei-Yoshino has become most popular for Ohanami since the Edo period because its flowers bloom at one time.

Since most urban areas have lost their natural areas, there is a strong temptation to mostly plant ornamental cherry trees; however this is not prudent environmentally, fiscally, or culturally. Traditional customs that cherish various other native flowering trees and plants (such as peach, wisteria and chrysanthemum) are parts of Japan's cultural heritage important to future generations. And, as part of this natural heritage, it is important to learn about and enjoy wild cherry trees with their history and tradition.

Somei-Yoshino's life span is usually 60 years. Because it does not have DNA diversity, even though people plant them in great numbers, toward the end of their life they all must be replanted. And, when only one species is planted in great numbers, they are more vulnerable to disease or to an invasive species. Once an invasive species has found its new home in a monocultural habitat, it can sometimes spread out into surrounding natural areas. For example, in 2011, red-

necked longhorn beetles (*Aromia bungii*) invaded in Japan and kept spreading rapidly causing serious problems. Their larvae love rose-family trees including cherry. Some botanists have pointed out a possibility that cherry trees planted along so many roads and parks helped these beetles to spread all over Japan.

Trees along a road can be a symbol of a community and can become a part of an ecological network. People in general like one species of tall trees that can form a uniform landscape. Recently, however, some communities have started experiments which plant roadsides with multiple species of trees and wild grasses to help increase biodiversity and create ecological networks. When green areas are increased a variety of birds will come and use them. Research shows that as tree species diversity increases insect damage decreases, thus improving the overall environment of a community.

When we consider this, large plantings of cherry trees require much more maintenance and will be more expensive. Therefore, horticultural plants such as Somei-Yoshino cherry trees should be restricted to private lands and a small part of public parks.

It is important to promote recovery of natural areas in towns. We must nurture diverse native vegetation to support local natural ecosystems. Since Japan is blessed with a varied climate, geography, and rich vegetation, it is fitting for us to create urban springtime landscapes rich in native plants including wild cherry trees.



Somei-Yoshino cherry is indispensable for both domestic and foreign tourists. But Japan has many other native, natural plants with beautiful flowers



In former days, people enjoyed various native cherry trees and wild primrose because each locale had different kinds of flowers



Because Somei-Yoshino is a horticultural plant, it lacks DNA diversity. Accordingly, it is vulnerable to invasive species



Tree plantings consisting only of Somei-Yoshino cherry are very popular in Japan. But it is time to consider new plantings of mixed native trees and wild grasses that can coexist with nature and become parts of ecological networks

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